



## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Family tickled by adoption on Adoption Day

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**By Norma Lerner**

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CASSOPOLIS -- Mark and Sherry couldn't have been happier on Tuesday.

They adopted a child on Michigan Adoption Day to add to their family and gave their 7-year-old daughter, Lillian, a new little brother.

The couple has been married 19 years, and it took 10 years to have their first child. Now they have Christopher, who is 2 1/2.

"It's like a Christmas toy. He is following me around," Lillian said Tuesday in Cass County's Probate Family Court where Adoption Day ceremonies were held.

"We are most excited that the process is over with," said Mark, who with his wife, Sherry, asked that their last name not be used. "It was an arduous process going through the state's compact (legalities) of Michigan and Indiana and filling the requirements of both states."

The couple tried to have another child after Lillian was born, but were unsuccessful. Then, the opportunity came along to adopt Christopher.

"The boy had been abandoned, and it was either watch the boy go to the custody of the state or do something about it," Sherry said, adding that Lillian and Christopher act like typical sister and brother. "They are already scrap with each other."

During the court procedure, Tami Phillips, Cass County Human Services social worker, said Christopher is a wonderful little boy.

"I got to know him. He is really grown," she said.

Likewise, Greg Feldman, attorney guardian for Christopher, said, "Christopher is going to a wonderful home full of love and joy."

Judge Susan Dobrich asked with a big smile, after finalizing the adoption procedure for Mark and Sherry, if they loved Christopher and accepted full responsibility for him. They said "yes."

Dobrich said Michigan Adoption Day, in its fourth year, is a special day. The legislators picked the Tuesday before Thanksgiving as the day. She thanked the families who supported the adoption system and said Cass County finalized more than 60 local adoptions this year.

Attorney Dennis Tushla said that before every hearing the chosen attorney has to meet with the child especially when children are placed in a remote location. He said he listens to any particular problem they may have.

"I enjoy it. The kids are terrific," he said. "We are in a much faster track in uniting families. You should be proud of this judge in getting the job done."

Mary Rossman from the Michigan Children's Institute, said there are 6,000 children in Michigan waiting to be adopted, and of those 2,500 were adopted so far this year. Its goal is to adopt out 4,000.

"We have a long ways to go. We are grateful to the parents who have taken these children in. Some (children) have had a lot of trauma. Now they can have a sense of stability," she said.

Dobrich ended the court day of four adoptions to three families with a celebration.

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